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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN & ECOWAS EFFORTS TO COMBAT WEST AFRICAN
DRUG TRAFFICKING

REF: 07 SECSTATE 165562

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

11. (SBU) In response to reftel, Post provides the following
information concerning Nigerian and ECOWAS efforts to combat
drug trafficking. This cable has been cleared by DEA/Lagos
and Legatt/Lagos.

NIGERIA

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Nigeria remains a hub of narcotics
trafficking and money laundering activity. Nigerian criminal
organizations dominate the African drug trade and transport
narcotics to markets in the United States, Europe, Asia, and
other parts of Africa. Some of these organizations are
engaged in advance-fee fraud, commonly referred to in Nigeria
as "419 Fraud," and other forms of defrauding U.S. citizens
and businesses as well as citizens and businesses of other
countries. Serious under/unemployment has been a major
problem for Nigeria during periods of civilian and military
rule alike. The human misery related to unemployment and an
associated economic decline contributes significantly to the
continuation and expansion of drug trafficking, widespread
corruption, and other criminal acts in Nigeria. These
factors, combined with Nigeria's central location along the
major trafficking routes and access to global narcotics
markets provide both an incentive and a mechanism for
criminal groups to flourish. Nigeria's law enforcement
efforts are underfunded and poorly coordinated, and while
Nigeria has a national anti-drug strategy, most of its goals
remain unfulfilled. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) Nigeria is a major transit point for drugs destined
for the U.S., Europe, Asia, and the rest of the African
continent. Heroin from southeast and southwest Asia,
smuggled via Nigeria, accounts for a significant portion of
the heroin reaching the U.S., while Nigerian criminal
elements in South America ship cocaine through Nigeria to
Europe, Asia, and the rest of Africa (with South Africa being
the continent's largest single consumer nation).
Nigerian-grown marijuana, cultivated in all 36 states, is
exported to neighboring nations and Europe, but not to the
U.S. in any significant quantities. Aside from marijuana,
Nigeria does not produce any of the drugs that its nationals

traffic, and neither is it a producer of precursor chemicals.

Domestic demand for hard drugs is low, but seems to be on the rise, and heroin and cocaine are readily available in major Nigerian cities (in the absence of a formal effort to gauge the problem, however, the actual extent of domestic drug abuse is unknown).

¶4. (SBU) Nigeria's main anti-narcotics force is the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The NDLEA's most successful interdictions have taken place at Nigeria's international airports, with the successful targeting of individual couriers, but it has outright failed in efforts to apprehend major traffickers. Attempts by the NDLEA to arrest and prosecute major players and their associates often fall apart in the courts, which are subject to intimidation and corruption. Asset seizures, which are permitted under law, have never been systematically utilized as an enforcement tool. Drug-related prosecutions, however, continue along at a steady pace, and special drug courts have helped increase the NDLEA's effectiveness. The NDLEA also operates demand reduction programs in schools and universities. Regionally, the NDLEA has assumed something of a leadership position, creating (in association with DEA) the West African Joint Operation (WAJO) initiative, and cooperating with the South African police to target Nigerian nationals there. The NDLEA also recently assisted Benin's Criminal Investigation Unit in the seizure and investigation of 360 kg of cocaine.

¶5. (C) The NDLEA is woefully underfunded, and, though mandated to work in concert with the Police, Customs, State Security Service, and Immigration, in practice does not coordinate well with those bodies. Although all law enforcement elements are represented at Nigeria's

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international airports and seaports, joint operations between them are virtually non-existent. This missing ingredient partially explains the dearth of apprehensions of major traffickers or the consistent interdiction of major shipments of contraband. No single law enforcement agency in Nigeria has adequate resources to combat the increasingly sophisticated international crime networks operating in and through the country. And, like all Nigerian government agencies, the NDLEA suffered a loss of focus while the country concentrated on the April 2007 general elections, further reducing its effectiveness.

¶6. (SBU) Nigeria's counter-narcotics policy is based on the National Drug Control Master Plan, which has been in place since 1998. The Plan assigns responsibilities to various government ministries and agencies, as well as to NGOs and other interest groups. And, while it outlines basic resource requirements and timeframes for the completion of its goals, many agencies remain underfunded and their objectives unfulfilled. With a premier place in Nigeria's national strategy, the NDLEA has 46 operational field commands, seven established directorates, and nine autonomous units that together carry out the drug control mandate of the agency.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Nigeria is the only African country on the Majors list for the USG's annual narcotics certification. Nigeria must make substantial efforts to adhere to its obligations under international counter-narcotics agreements and U.S. law. For the past several years, Nigeria has been on the borderline for certification. Specifically, Nigeria has failed demonstrably to identify, investigate, and arrest kingpins. Also, Nigeria has yet to act on any of the U.S. extradition requests pending since 2004. Moreover, federal funding for Nigerian law enforcement agencies remains insufficient and erratic in its disbursement, and Nigerian police officers are poorly trained. This affects Nigeria's ability to plan and follow-through on operations, resulting in ineffectiveness and an apparent lack of commitment to the task. Unless Nigeria remedies this situation, very little progress will be made and none sustained. It will require strong and sustained political will, combined with

international assistance and cooperation, to confront these issues and bring about meaningful change. END COMMENT.

ECOWAS

¶8. (SBU) The Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) anti-narcotics strategy is embodied in its Regional Plan of Action, adopted in 1997. The major goals of the eight point plan include:

a) The establishment or strengthening of national and regional structures for policy coordination and implementation. This goal urges member states to create multi-agency national task forces to analyze intelligence, engage in joint operations, establish a national laboratory, and set up a national drug control database. It also asks for regular meetings of regional ministers tasked with heading their countries' anti-drug efforts, the creation of a regional intelligence database, improved training of regional specialists, and the strengthening of the Regional Drug Control Training Center in Abidjan.

b) Intensified regional and international cooperation. This goal authorizes the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat (now the Presidency) to negotiate and sign agreements obtaining funding from the international community, recommends that ECOWAS accede to the 1988 U.N. Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics, and encourages the ratification of regional conventions on extradition and money laundering.

c) The adoption of region-wide harmonized anti-drug and money laundering legislation.

d) National human resource development to ensure ongoing multidisciplinary training for personnel involved in drug control, create special leadership training for law enforcement department heads, and form a body of legal personnel specializing in drug control.

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e) The execution of national epidemiological surveys to gauge the extent of local drug abuse.

and

f) The creation of national drug abuse prevention, crop substitution, and poverty alleviation plans, and the recognition of the importance that NGOs might play in demand reduction and addiction treatment.

¶9. (SBU) According to Mr. Gabriel Hounsou, ECOWAS' Acting Director for "Gender, Youth, Drug Control, etc." (per his handwritten card) and Mr. Mamadou Gueye, the former occupant of the same office, the successes of the recent past include the opening of an office in Dakar tasked with tracking money laundering in Senegal, the regular convening of the ministers' conference mentioned in paragraph (a) above, persuading some states to adopt certain UN-origin legislation, and generally raising awareness of the issue among member states.

¶10. (SBU) Hounsou and Gueye also said their office has practically no budget apart from approximately US\$60,000 dedicated to the annual ministers' conference, and money to put the ECOWAS logo on a small amount of office supplies to hand out to visitors. Their plans for the future are to visit Guinea-Bissau to express concern about the worsening situation there, and urge a response to the "total breakdown" of Guinea-Bissau law enforcement. When asked what practical effect ECOWAS has had on West African trafficking, they said they hoped their efforts had helped, but that the reality was that they likely had no effect at all. They cited the difficulties of working in a region that still had not come

to grips with its role in the international drug trade, and, by way of showing the bureaucratic obstacles hindering progress, cited past WAJO operations. As ECOWAS rules prohibit the recognition of more than one international anti-narcotics body at a time (currently that body is the UNODC), ECOWAS could not support WAJO in any meaningful way, resulting in the lack of international arrest and prosecution powers by WAJO teams.

¶11. (C) COMMENT: An uncomfortably long silence ensued when Poloff asked for particulars on ECOWAS successes in the war on drugs, and the few instances mentioned above are hard to quantify or qualify in any meaningful way. Indeed, though Mr. Hounsou is the closest thing ECOWAS has to an anti-drug czar, the majority of his portfolio is occupied by other concerns. Furthermore, there seemed to be no push to implement the remaining goals of the Plan of Action or to resolve some of the obvious bureaucratic and legal barriers hindering effective regional cooperation. Finally, with a minuscule budget sufficient for little more than one meeting, it is clear that fighting drug trafficking is a low priority for the Community. At present it is our judgment that ECOWAS has neither the capacity nor the will to play a major role in reducing the West African drug trade. END COMMENT.
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